



Political Culture in the 1590s: The 'Second Reign of Elizabeth'

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Abstract

In the mid-1990s, John Guy argued that Elizabethan political culture was transformed in the late 1580s, as the regime increasingly endorsed authoritarian definitions of monarchical power. This article reconsiders the foundations of Guy's hypothesis, analysing some of the key political and intellectual and literary contexts that conditioned the expression of political ideas in the final years of Elizabethan England.

The year 1585 was a crucial turning point in the reign of Elizabeth I: the Queen entered a formal military alliance with the Dutch, ending a generation of peace. In a collection of essays published in the mid-1990s, John Guy robustly argued that this vital year marked a more significant watershed. In a formulation intended to provoke debate, he proposed that the social, economic and political conditions of Elizabeth's 'last decade', (in fact the final 18 years of the Queen's rule), were so profoundly altered that the period should be styled Elizabeth's 'second reign'.¹

In particular, Guy argued that political culture – the interface between politics and political ideas – was significantly transformed in the late-1580s and 1590s. His argument was directly constructed in response to Patrick Collinson's famous definition of Elizabethan England as a 'monarchical republic', which had set a remarkable new agenda for the writing of Elizabethan political history. In a series of seminal essays written in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Collinson argued that Elizabethan political elites, including those at the heart of the government itself, predominantly conceptualised the state as a mixed monarchy, where the Queen's authority was bound by constitutional limitations and the obligation to listen to the counsel of virtuous subjects, whose ethos of active participation in the government of the commonwealth was informed by a fusion of Ciceronean ideals of citizenship and duty to the Protestant nation. At moments of tension, especially over Elizabeth's refusal to settle the succession, or to countenance further reform of the Church of England, some subjects articulated a concept of their separate duty to God and the realm over their personal allegiance to the Queen and/or endorsed the use of 'quasi-republican' forms of autonomous political action.²

Guy endorsed and applauded Collinson's definition of the monarchical republic, and the breadth and depth of its influence. But in 1585, he argued, the regime experienced a sharp 'swing to the right'. Strident imperial and absolute ideas of monarchy and the royal supremacy over the church emanated from the government and Elizabeth's episcopate in the Queen's 'second reign', which downplayed the credence of quasi-republican or mixed theories of government. More vaguely, Guy situated this redefinition of the ideology of the regime within a broader literary culture, which he also defined as

distinctive to the 1590s. Writers, readers and political actors began obsessively to analyse the nature of kingship and politics, especially through dark spectacles borrowed from Tacitus, the great historian of Imperial Rome.³

This article examines the foundations of Guy's argument. Did authoritarian ideas of monarchy/state power dominate in the later years of the reign? If so, what factors conditioned this change? And is it possible to tie broad analysis of literary and scholarly trends into a more generalised argument about political culture? Perhaps unsurprisingly, it will be argued that the teasing hypothesis of the 'second reign' must be modified. Ideas of absolute monarchy *were* more widely articulated after the mid-1580s; but Elizabethans continued to conceptualise and explore a range of ideas about the state in increasingly varied contexts, and in response to the particular challenges of the final years of the reign.

The chronological division between the Elizabeth's 'first' and 'second' reigns inevitably oversimplifies the homogeneity of political culture before the mid-1580s. Much recent Elizabethan historiography has endorsed Collinson's theory of the monarchical republic, but not without some significant qualifications (including those posed by Collinson himself).⁴ Ideas of mixed monarchy had been articulated at moments of particular tension or political crisis: it was in response to the dreadful possibility that the 'Scottish Jezebel', Mary Stewart, might seize the throne, that the Privy Council proffered radical or quasi-republican solutions in 1584–1585, the Bond of Association, and William Cecil's proposal that in the event of Elizabeth's death, parliament and a great council would elect her successor. In different circumstances, however, the regime had previously endorsed more authoritarian political doctrines. In response to the Catholic rebellion of the Northern Earls in 1569, and the papal bull of 1570, which 'released' English subjects from their allegiance to the Queen, the government issued the 'Homily against Disobedience and Wylful Rebellion' (1571), which asserted the divine origins of monarchy, and defined political obedience as a religious duty, incumbent on all subjects.

The political conditions of Elizabeth's later reign were, however, transformed by a variety of interconnected factors.⁵ In particular, the radical solutions to the succession crisis planned in 1584–1585 were rendered redundant by the execution of Mary Stewart in 1587. Despite the failure of the Armada in 1588, the chief threat to the security of the Protestant state was now invasion from Catholic Spain. The priorities of late Elizabethan government, therefore, were dominated by war: by Elizabeth's military support of the Dutch Protestants, but also of Henry of Navarre, who, from 1589, asserted his title to the French throne in opposition to the combined forces of the Catholic League and Philip II. War with Spain also intersected with the politics of succession, which remained perilously unsettled. Although the longed-for (male) Protestant successor to Elizabeth – James VI of Scotland – now seemed a credible heir, radical English Catholics such as Robert Parsons, the Jesuit, supported the claim of Philip II's daughter, the Infanta Isabella, to the horror of the Protestant regime.

In the domestic political realm, the consensual operation of politics, which had largely characterised the workings of the regime and Privy Council, was ruptured by the deaths of key personnel, in particular the earl of Leicester (d. 1586) and Sir Francis Walsingham (d. 1590). The court was plunged into factional conflict by the rise of Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, who challenged the dominance of Elizabeth's longest-serving Privy Councillor, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, over patronage and control of domestic and military policy.⁶ Finally, and most germane to Guy's thesis, the primacy of John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1583, transformed the religious politics of the final years of Elizabeth's reign, ushering in a new intolerance of Puritanism and non-conformity to the services of the Church of England.⁷

It is significant that much recent work on Elizabethan political culture – including Collinson's own original articles on the monarchical republic – does not reach forward into the 1590s.⁸ But Anne McLaren, in her own important monograph on Elizabethan political culture (which covers the period 1558–1585), firmly endorses Guy's argument, whereas historians of political ideas in the Stuart period have pointed to the articulation of more authoritarian concepts of monarchy in the final years of Elizabeth's reign; as if ideological ground was prepared for the accession of a king who was himself one of the most famous theorists of divine right monarchy.⁹

Perhaps the clearest theoretical assault on concepts of mixed monarchy came from a set of conformist divines, who rose to prominence in the 1580s, on the coattails of Whitgift. Richard Bancroft, John Cosin, Thomas Bilson and Matthew Sutcliffe wrote apologetic in defence of the official religious policies of state and Church, in which they asserted the divine authority of the Royal Supremacy against radical Puritans, who would have reduced the power of the monarch over the national church to that of a figure-head.¹⁰ Whitgift denounced the Presbyterian Thomas Cartwright's preference for a mixed, secular polity as perilously 'democratic'. In 1588–1589, when a series of anonymous, biting satirical pamphlets lampooned the English episcopacy, conformist clerics condemned Puritan agitation as dangerously subversive; the leadership of the Puritan movement was silenced by coercion or imprisonment.

Guy demonstrated that in the context of disputes over the legality of Whitgift's proceedings against Puritans, canon lawyers in the 1590s insisted that the Royal Supremacy permitted Elizabeth to empower High Commission to override English common law; a fairly text-book theory of absolute monarchy, placing the monarch above the positive laws of the land. Ethan Shagan has more recently added texture to this position, showing that conformist divines made deeply authoritarian claims about the public power of the state/monarchy to force matters of private conscience.¹¹

This impulse to define a more authoritarian version of royal power and the supremacy sprung especially from the desire to repress radical elements of theories of mixed monarchy currently endorsed in continental and Scottish political tracts, which legitimised the armed resistance of subjects to misgoverning monarchs. James VI's own famous treatise, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), asserted the divine origins of monarchical power and the absolute obedience of subjects to confute the resistance theories of his former tutor, George Buchanan, and the more radical Presbyterians of the Scottish kirk.¹² Collinson has argued that theories of resistance were sometimes implicit – if not coherently spelled out – in forms of English quasi-republican thought; a point vehemently argued by Bancroft, in his fierce condemnation of the 'dangerous positions' of Presbyterianism.¹³

But the expression of political ideas, of course, was hardly the exclusive preserve of conformist divines within the Church of England. Until recently, mainstream historiography had largely ignored the group that had long been the chief target of the regime's efforts to impose religious conformity: Roman Catholics. The reintegration of Catholic responses to the Elizabethan state into more comprehensive narratives of politics and religion has been one of the most fruitful currents in recent Elizabethan historiography, adding significantly to our understanding of the theoretical positions adopted by the regime.¹⁴

The credibility of the ideological foundations of the Protestant monarchical republic had, in fact, been mocked in Catholic polemical texts authored in the 1570s, 1580s and 1590s. Mischievous treatises written by Catholics, the *Treatise of Treasons* (1572), *The Copie of a letter written by a Master of Art in Cambridge to his friend in London* (1584), commonly known as 'Leicester's Commonwealth' and *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles presupposed to be intended against England* (1592), also referred to as 'Burghley's

Commonwealth', described the Elizabethan polity as a toxic state, where the Queen's counsellors – in particular the Earl of Leicester and William Cecil – were self-serving, ambitious atheists, tyrannising over the Queen.¹⁵ The authors of these tracts were not concerned to assert the superiority of a particular political structure, mixed or absolute/imperial, but instead focused on the moral qualities, the virtues and vices of men and women in positions of power; an emphasis that anticipated the characteristics of much non-Catholic political discourse of the 1590s.

The regime's repudiation of theories of mixed monarchy in the late 1580s and 1590s, however, was also a response to Catholic as well as Puritan non-conformity, and, again, was driven by the desire to impress the obligation of political obedience on Elizabeth's subjects. Certain Catholic authors in the 1570s and 1580s – Nicholas Sanders, Robert Parsons and William Allen – began to endorse the papal deposition of Elizabeth. From the 1570s onwards, the regime had been consistently alive to the threat of assassination plots by supporters of Mary, Queen of Scots; but the war with Spain, the invasion scare of 1588 and the support of Catholics such as Parsons for a Spanish successor to Elizabeth, enhanced the regime's fears of domestic Catholic insurrection.¹⁶ In 1585, the cleric, Thomas Bilson, writing to refute the theory of the papal deposing power, defined the resistance of English subjects as illegitimate on the grounds that England was an absolute monarchy, *not* a limited or elective monarchy such as Poland, where subjects could place constitutional restraints on the authority of the prince.¹⁷

This association of Catholics with radical theories of resistance was enhanced in the 1590s, especially in response to the polemical works of Robert Parsons. Most notoriously, Parsons' *A Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of England* (1594/5), electrified the court on its appearance in 1595, because it yoked an argument for the superiority of the Infanta's claim over that of James VI to a full exposition of the radical implications of theories of mixed monarchy, endorsing the deposition of tyrants through constitutional means such as the English Parliament.¹⁸ Other English Catholics, however, who dissented from Parsons' Hispanophile politics, were able to strike up common ideological ground with the Protestant regime, over shared definitions of authoritarian political power.¹⁹ From 1598 a group of Catholic priests known as the Appellants, in the midst of a bitter jurisdictional quarrel with the Jesuits, petitioned Elizabeth for toleration of Catholic worship, in return for an almost hysterical expression of unconditional allegiance to their prince in matters unrelated to conscience. In an extraordinary twist, the rash of treatises that they authored, which denounced Jesuit theories of resistance and defined obedience to secular powers as part of natural law, were covertly published under the auspices of Robert Cecil and Richard Bancroft.²⁰ There was a clear logic to the regime's underhand endorsement of Appellant propaganda: here was home-grown, anti-Spanish, anti-Jesuit polemic, which defined virtuous English Catholics as loyal subjects of Queen and state. But once again, the regime propagated absolute ideas of monarchy in response to the political ideas of opponents of the Elizabethan ecclesiastical polity.

The confessional divisions that followed the European Reformations had provoked response throughout the territorial states of Western Christendom to the same political problems: the relationship between secular and religious authority, the rights and duties of subjects and the response to tyrants or ungodly princes.²¹ In particular, the government of Henry of Navarre, Elizabeth's ally in the war with Spain, experienced its own, much more emphatic 'swing to the right' in the 1590s. French absolutism, articulated by its most famous theorist, Jean Bodin, was rooted in the experience of wars of religion, and the desire to re-establish a stable state and monarchy. Bodin's *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1576) discredited the concept of mixed monarchy by arguing that the juridical

sovereignty of the monarch or state could not be divided or shared with lesser magistrates, or representative institutions. Did French political ideas shape the conservative political culture discerned by Guy?

The crisis in France fascinated and appalled Elizabethans, who were only too fearful that England would experience their own civil wars, if their confessional divisions and unsettled succession remained unresolved. Bodin's *Six Books of the Commonwealth* was certainly read with zeal by Elizabethan scholars in the 1580s and 1590s, although a published translation only appeared in 1606, after the accession of James VI to the English throne.²² Reaching a wider audience, though, were French vernacular translations of propaganda for Navarre, which poured off the London presses in staggering numbers in the late 1580s and 1590s. These pamphlets appealed to the tabloid-taste of Elizabethans, reporting war, murder and rebellion, catalysed by the mighty 'universal' ambition of the Spanish monarchy. But they also exposed English readers to ideas of absolute monarchy and theories of political obedience as articulated by Navarre's propagandists. Lisa Ferraro Parmelee's study of the impact of these tracts, argues that the project of publication/translation was coordinated at the behest of Elizabeth's government, specifically Burghley, acting in conjunction with London printers. The pamphlets acted as indirect propaganda for England's support of Navarre's military campaigns, but the regime also welcomed their wider function, which was to disseminate theories of absolute monarchy and obedience to Elizabeth's subjects.²³

Here, however, the work of Markku Peltonen, also on printed translations, offers instructive contrast to Parmelee's findings. Peltonen finds notable survival of interest in theories of mixed monarchy in different writings about states other than England: in Lewis Lewkenor's English translation of Gasparo Contarini's treatise *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* (1599), a description of the Venetian republican constitution, and a translation of the Polish author Goslicius' *The Counsellor* (1598), which also praised mixed monarchies. Crucially, Goslicius' tract defined England as a mixed monarchy, approvingly likening the English Parliament to the Polish and Venetian senates in the constitutional restraints that it placed on the monarch's powers.²⁴ The contrasting emphases of Parmelee and Peltonen's work shows that in printed texts, very contrasting theories of government remained in circulation in the 1590s, albeit in tracts that contained indirect comment on the Elizabethan polity. As Peltonen argues, this enhanced awareness of the political arrangements of foreign states encouraged Elizabethans to contrast and compare the constitutional arrangements of the English polity to different models of government.

Although Elizabeth's government aligned itself with the absolute political ideas of Navarre's position, English foreign policy significantly strained the ideological position of the regime. While enjoining subjects to obedience, Elizabeth's government had also to justify the Queen's support of the 'rebel' United Provinces, who had abjured the sovereignty of Philip II, and governed themselves as a *de facto* republic; an inconsistency exploited with glee in Robert Parsons' polemical tracts. Again, a theorised defence of Elizabeth's succour of the Dutch that denounced domestic rebellion required constitutional differentiation. The Netherlands was defined as an elective and limited monarchy which allowed subjects to take up arms against their prince in defence of their freedoms and privileges: such solutions to tyranny were forbidden in the monarchy of England, an absolute monarchy, governed by hereditary rather than elected princes.²⁵ The published translation of Book IV of the famous Huguenot resistance treatise the *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, which justified foreign intervention in support of the subjects of an oppressed people, was glossed with a marginal note: 'reade this aduisedly because we may not by the worde of God resist our own prince if he [sic] be wicked'.²⁶

The tensions and ambiguities inherent in the ideological defence of Elizabeth's war with Spain were exemplified in the earl of Essex's conceptualisation of the war. Essex had inherited the mantle of Leicester and Walsingham as the most bellicose proponent of an aggressively anti-Spanish foreign policy on the Council. Unlike the international protestant vision of his forerunners, however, Essex was sympathetic to forms of loyal Catholicism, and his justification of the war dwelt less on the threat of popery than the urgent need to thwart Spanish ambitions of imperial hegemony that threatened all states – Catholic and Protestant. Essex approvingly discussed constitutional arrangements of the United Provinces; in the context of defending Elizabeth's foreign policy, some of his circle explored more radical theories of resistance, suggesting that they could be applicable in any European state, including the English commonwealth.²⁷

Indeed, although Guy acknowledged that 'the politics of the 1590s were driven ... by the second earl of Essex', it is very difficult to fit the narrative of Essex's political career, and his enormous impact on the politics of the 1590s, into a comprehensive model of a more authoritarian political culture.²⁸ Theories of monarchy expressed by Essex and his circle cannot in any sense be defined as endorsing absolute monarchy. 'Cannot Princes Erre?' the earl asked Lord Keeper Egerton in a famous, and deliberately circulated letter of 1598: 'let them acknowledge an infinite absoluteness on earth, that do not believe in an absolute infiniteness in heaven'.²⁹ The mentality of Essex drew on a wide range of languages and ideas, but some elements of the ethos of the monarchical republic were appropriated and adopted by the earl to shape his vision of queen, commonwealth and his own political destiny. Paul Hammer has shown that Essex possessed an overwhelming sense of his own martial and intellectual abilities, and the active role that he deserved, as a virtuous subject, to play in public life; fusing medieval chivalric traditions with classical ideas of the *vita activa*.³⁰ Richard McCoy has emphasised that the earl's pronounced awareness of his own noble status, which he contrasted with the humbler origins of William and Robert Cecil, extended to a deeper interest in the constitutional powers of the ancient nobility: itself representative of an aristocratic theory of mixed monarchy.³¹

Rather than systems of government, however, Essex's political mentality focused far more intensely on the morality of political actors. The decline of the earl's career and his revolt of 1601 were propelled by his developing belief in the corruption of the Elizabethan court. As the decade progressed, Essex tended to view any hindrance of his own political designs, especially in the realms of foreign policy and patronage, as a manifestation of the workings of base-born evil counsellors, jealous of his superior virtue.³² Essex's failed revolt of 1601 was a pitifully unsuccessful attempt to force his way to the Queen's presence and to remove his personal enemies from the court, whom he also conceptualised as the foes of the Queen and the English commonwealth.

The earl's suspicion of ignoble courtiers parallels earlier Catholic polemic against Cecil and Leicester, as well an earlier, medieval, anti-courtier literature. But Essex's particular interest in political corruption, and the dichotomy of evil and virtuous counsel, also had its roots in the wider literary culture; especially in the period's intense interest in history. Between 1579 and 1606, nearly 50 plays about English history were written (a number that declines swiftly after the accession of James).³³ Printed translations of Roman history in late Elizabethan England also appeared in increasing numbers from the late 1580s, notably Henry Savile and Peter Greneway's translations of the works of Tacitus in 1591 and 1598; evidence of the enthusiastic engagement of Elizabethan readers with the classical past.³⁴

Although Guy signalled that historical scholarship was a distinctive feature of the 1590s, his broad assessment of the literary interests of late Elizabethan writers, readers and

audiences does not fit convincingly into his argument for a rightward thrust in the political culture. The increasing association of the late Elizabethan regime with more authoritarian definitions of monarchical power and the Royal Supremacy must be contrasted with the developing complexity of a literary culture, where drama and poetry were frequently used as a vehicle to explore political ideas, and to scrutinise the actions of monarchs and their greater subjects.

In particular, a deep understanding of the patterns of history was prized by contemporaries precisely because of the insight that it gave into the operation of politics in the present.³⁵ The Queen is famously alleged to have recognised that contemporaries drew parallels between her reign and the reign of the deposed Richard II.³⁶ Essex's supporters certainly watched a play about the king's deposition on the eve of his rising, although, crucially, the historical record does not reveal for certain the identity of the play or its author, or why those supporters commissioned its performance and how they interpreted the drama.³⁷

Writers were especially keen to retell and dramatise periods of political change and instability that reflected contemporary anxieties about civil conflict and crises of succession. The baronial wars of England's recent medieval past were retold in the chronicle plays, or works such as John Hayward's prose history, *The First Part of the Life and Raigne of Henry VIII* (1599), and Samuel Daniel and Michel Drayton's quasi-epic historical poems of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Classical Rome offered similarly foreboding examples: the civil wars of the late Republic were dramatised in Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War* (1594), and versified in Marlowe's translation of the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (posthumously published in 1600); while Savile's translation of Tacitus' *Histories* narrated the brutal military struggles for the imperial title after the death of Nero.³⁸ The depiction of monarchical government in late Elizabethan literature was often bleak. Plays about the glittering, if morally ambiguous Henry V, were rare examples of literary representations of successful monarchs: audiences were more regularly treated to the spectacle of the dreadful fates of weak kings, Edward II and Henry VI, and more wilful tyrants, Richard II and Richard III, and of England herself, polluted by popular rebellion, and menaced by the ambitions of over-mighty nobles and the corruption of favourites and creatures of the court.³⁹

The massive body of Shakespeare scholarship exemplifies the impossibility of drawing general conclusions about the attitudes of many Elizabethan writers towards particular theories of state.⁴⁰ Shakespeare was certainly interested in questions of law, legitimacy and rebellion, famously exploring resistance and deposition in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Richard II*. In *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), he explored the act which precipitated the expulsion of Rome's kings, and the creation of the republic; in *Julius Caesar* (1599), Shakespeare revisited Rome on the eve of its transition to empire.⁴¹ But Andrew Hadfield, perhaps the most enthusiastic exponent of recovering Shakespeare's 'political voice', can only demonstrate Shakespeare's interest in – rather than endorsement of – republican political doctrines and theories of state.⁴² Most significantly, writers used historical settings to explore a range of theoretical positions and political ideas, for digestion and interpretation by readers/audiences.⁴³

The ambiguity inherent in defining precisely how Elizabethans read their history books is particularly apparent in different contemporary responses to Tacitus, the most fashionable of classical authors in the late sixteenth century.⁴⁴ In continental Europe, interest in the chronicler of Imperial Rome was usually associated with the development of absolutist theories of monarchy, and the literature of 'reason of state'. The most influential interpretation was that of Justus Lipsius, whose *Six Books of Politics* (1589) took myriad quotations

from classical authors, especially Tacitus, to build an argument that urged early modern rulers to enhance the authority of the centralised state at the expense of more participatory forms of government. Lipsius' treatise was widely read in late Elizabethan England, in the original Latin and, from 1594, in William Jones' printed translation.⁴⁵

But Tacitus – the most enigmatic of classical historians – presented readers with no clear or prescriptive theories of government, and was often differently interpreted by Elizabethan readers.⁴⁶ In contrast to Lipsius, Savile's own readings of Tacitus explored the legitimacy of theories of noble resistance to tyranny.⁴⁷ The glorious *exemplum* of Agricola, however, notorious for his martial prowess, but also his loyalty to the tyrant Domitian, also found great positive resonance in the martial culture of Essex's circle. But Tacitus warned of the propensity for weak monarchs to resent subjects of great virtue such as Agricola – and Essex. Rulers jealous of their greatest subjects were likely to be wooed by the poisonous flattery of evil counsellors and ambitious favourites, a reading that certainly shaped the earl's complex attitude towards the Queen and his enemies at court.⁴⁸ The different response of readers to political ideas in literary or historical texts, however, demonstrates more emphatically the diversification of political thinking in late Elizabethan England.

As the decade wore on, the regime itself exhibited an increased anxiety about the expression of political ideas in literature, and the response that such ideas might provoke in the wider public. Although Cyndia Clegg reminds us that press censorship was erratically enforced, the Bishop's Ban of 1599 called in and burned a selection of literary texts, and prohibited the publication of satires, epigrams, histories and plays without prior authorisation. Sensitivity towards the political content of histories was particularly evidenced in the censorship of Hayward's *First Part of the Life and Raigne of Henry VIII*, in 1599 and 1600. The controversy surrounding the book was occasioned by its dedication to Essex, whose extreme dissatisfaction with the politics of the court was increasingly apparent by the time of the book's publication. The history itself, an account of the deposition of Richard II, contained a detailed portrait of the rule of a tyrant, and drew obvious parallels between the governments of Richard and Elizabeth. Much as in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, however, arguments for and against the legitimacy of resistance were forcefully articulated by different characters: recent scholarship has convincingly argued that Hayward's message was thoroughly orthodox, that he had intended the work to deliver a warning – probably to its notorious dedicatee – about the terrible consequences of rebellion, no matter how extreme the provocation of the ruler.⁴⁹ But the late Elizabethan authorities made an exceptionally authoritarian reading of Hayward's history, denouncing it fiercely as a work that legitimised rebellion. Under interrogation Hayward was forced to deny that he had argued that subjects owed their allegiance to the state, rather than the person of the monarch, or that he had endorsed any theory of mixed monarchy. Despite protestations of loyalism, Hayward was imprisoned in the Tower until after the accession of James; his stay prolonged by Essex's revolt in 1601.⁵⁰

In particular contexts, Guy's hypothesis was correct. The desire of conformist clerics to defend the authority of the Royal Supremacy against Protestant and Catholic critics of the Elizabethan church and State engendered the dissemination of more authoritarian concepts of monarchical power. These were provoked by an increasingly heightened sensitivity of the regime towards doctrines of rebellion and resistance. Far from a confident monarchism, this 'shift to the right' was conditioned by the insecurity of a wartime government, fearful of civil insurrection, stumbling towards a future where the successor to Elizabeth remained far from clear. But this theory prioritised one element of discourse in an increasingly diversified political culture. The regime's concern to propagate

conservative and authoritarian political ideas may actually have rendered a clearer distinction between different theories of state, as Elizabethans were encouraged to contrast absolute and mixed theories of government, and to compare the English polity with continental and classical models of monarchies and republics. The dominant thrust of the literary culture, however, focussed less on contrasting constitutional theories of government, but subjected the moral qualities of monarchs and the ruling elites – and the politics of the court in particular – to increasingly intensive and scathing critique. This was the complex ideological legacy that would be inherited by the Stuart monarchs.

Short Biography

Alexandra Gajda's work is situated in the political and intellectual culture of early modern England and Europe. She is in the process of completing a monograph on the circle of Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex. She has published and forthcoming articles in *Historical Research*, the *Historical Journal*, *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* and the *Oxford Handbook to John Donne*. Alexandra is lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of Birmingham, where she is a member of the Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies. She studied for her BA and DPhil at New College, Oxford University, and she was also a Junior Research Fellow at Oxford, at St Anne's College. In 2006, Alexandra won the Sir John Neale Prize for Tudor History.

Notes

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¹ See 'Introduction. The 1590s: The Second Reign of Elizabeth I', in John Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–19.

² Patrick Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I', in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon: 1994), 31–57; 'The Elizabethan exclusion crisis and the Elizabethan polity', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 84 (1994): 51–92.

³ Guy, 'Introduction: The 1590s'.

⁴ See in particular the recent collection of essays, John F. McDiarmid (ed.), *The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I. Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

⁵ I. W. Archer, 'The 1590s: Apotheosis or Nemesis of the Elizabethan Regime?', in A. Briggs and D. Snowman (eds.), *Fins de Siècle: How Centuries End* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 65–98.

⁶ Simon Adams, 'Favourites, and Factions at the Elizabethan Court' in idem, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 46–67; P. E. J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁷ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape: 1967), 385–431; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterian and Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1988).

⁸ See, for example, A. N. McLaren, *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558–1585* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Natalie Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁹ McLaren, *Political Culture*, 9–10, 195–7; also see Collinson, 'Afterword', in McDiarmid (ed.), *Monarchical Republic*, pp. 256–7.

¹⁰ John Guy, 'The Elizabethan Establishment and the Ecclesiastical Polity', in Guy (ed.), *Reign of Elizabeth I*, 126–49; Johann P. Sommerville, 'Richard Hooker, Hadrian Saravia, and the Advent of the Divine Right of Kings', *History of Political Thought*, 4 (1983): 229–45; Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 135–9.

¹¹ Guy, 'Elizabethan Establishment'; Ethan Shagan, 'The English Inquisition: Constitutional Conflict and Ecclesiastical Law in the 1590s', *Historical Journal*, 47:3 (2004): 541–65.

¹² King James VI, 'The Trew Law of Free Monarchies', in Johann P. Sommerville (ed.), *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994), 62–84; cf. 68–71.

¹³ Collinson, 'Elizabethan Exclusion Crisis', 84–7; Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 111–13.

- ¹⁴ See in particular Ethan Shagan (ed.) *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).
- ¹⁵ Michael Questier, 'Elizabeth and the Catholics', in Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation'*, 69–94; Peter Lake, '“The monarchical republic of Elizabeth I” revisited (by its Victims) as a Conspiracy', in Barry Coward and Julian Swann (eds.), *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe: From the Waldensians to the French Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 87–111.
- ¹⁶ Peter Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of Elizabethan Catholics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 136–61.
- ¹⁷ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 132–4; Thomas Bilson, *The True Difference between Christian Subjection and Unchristian Rebellion* (Oxford, 1585).
- ¹⁸ Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Person's Jesuit polemic, 1580–1610* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
- ¹⁹ Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalty in Elizabethan England* (London: Scholar Press, 1979); Lake and Questier, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, 231–335. Also see Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
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- ²⁶ H. P. trans., *An Short Apologie for Christian Soldiers* (1588), unpaginated.
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- ²⁹ Walter Devereux (ed.), *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex, 1540–1646* (London: Spottiswoodes and Shaw, 1853), I, 499–503.
- ³⁰ Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan politics*, 199–268.
- ³¹ Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989), 80–102.
- ³² We await the second volume of Paul Hammer's political biography of Essex for a full account of the rising. See P. E. J. Hammer, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 59/1, 1–35. The best account remains M. E. James, 'At a Crossroads of the Political Culture: The Essex Revolt, 1601', in his *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 416–65.
- ³³ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 41.
- ³⁴ Quentin Skinner, 'Classical Liberty, Renaissance Translation and the English Civil War', in Quentin Skinner (ed.), *Visions of Politics. II. Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2002), 308–43.
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- ³⁶ J. J. Manning (ed.), *The First and Second Parts of John Hayward's 'The Life and Raigne of King Henrie III'* Camden Society, 4th ser., 42 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1991), 2.
- ³⁷ See the most recent debates between Paul Hammer and Blair Worden: Hammer, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*'; Blair Worden, 'Which Play was Performed at the Globe Theatre on 7 February 1601?', *London Review of Books*, 25/13 (2003): 22–4.
- ³⁸ R. Malcolm Smuts, 'Court-Centred Historians and the Uses of Tacitus, c. 1590–c. 1630', in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 21–43. For recent suggestive work on Daniel, see G. Wright, 'Samuel Daniel's Use of Sources in the Civil Wars', *Studies in Philology*, 101/1 (2004): 59–87.
- ³⁹ Curtis Perry, *Literature and Favouritism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- ⁴⁰ For an important warning about simplistic political readings of Shakespeare, see Colin Burrow, 'Reading Tudor Writing Politically: The Case of 2 *Henry IV*', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 38 (2008): 234–50.
- ⁴¹ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 184–204. See also, Rita Banerjee, 'The Common Good and the Necessity of War: Emergent Republican Ideals in Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *Coriolanus*', *Comparative Drama*, 40/1 (2006): 29–49.
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- ⁴³ For the history of early modern reading practices see the famous article by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, '“Studied for Action”: How Gabriel Harvey read his Livy', *Past and Present*, 129 (1990): 30–78; also Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).
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- ⁴⁶ The point made by A. T. Bradford, 'Stuart Absolutism and the Utility of Tacitus', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46 (1983): 127–55; also an unpublished paper by Professor Malcolm Smuts, 'The Varieties of Tacitus in Britain'; I am grateful to Professor Smuts for sharing his work with me.
- ⁴⁷ Womersley, 'Henry Savile'.
- ⁴⁸ Worden, 'Historians and Poets'.
- ⁴⁹ Alzada Tipton, '“Lively Patterns ... for Affayres of State”: Sir John Hayward's *The Life and Reigne of King Henrie III* and the Earl of Essex', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33 (2002): 769–94; Rebecca Lemon, *Treason by Words: Literature, Law, and Rebellion in Shakespeare's England* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).
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